

MEETING MINUTES

Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts

May 13, 2014

9:30 AM

Two Hundred and Eighty - Eighth Meeting

In Attendance: Dan Ellison, President; Shane Wells, Secretary-Treasurer; David Cowherd; Orville Bennett; Bobbie Wilson; John Chism; Allan Bryant; Tony Nott, acting NRCS State Conservationist; Brian Hacker, RC&D Council; Commissioner Steve Hohmann, DNR; Deputy Commissioner Sandy Gruzsky, DNR; Steve Kelly, Department of Agriculture; Gary Crenshaw, FSA; and Director Leah MacSwords, DOF.

Also in attendance were Division of Conservation employees Kim Richardson, Director; Johnna McHugh, Assistant Director; and Angella Reynolds. Quorum was met.

Meeting called to order - at 9:30 a.m. and introductions were made by KACD President Dan Ellison.

KACD Minutes of the Last Meeting - March 11, 2014

Mr. John Larson and Mr. Earl Garber names need to be corrected on the March 11, 2014 minutes. Motion to approve the minutes with corrections was made by Mr. Orville Bennett, motion seconded by Mr. Allan Bryant. **Motion carried.**

Treasurer's Report

KACD Treasurer, Mr. Shane Wells presented the KACD Treasurer's Report. Mr. Wells made the motion to accept the report as presented, motion seconded by Mr. John Chism. **Motion carried.**

KACD Correspondence was presented by Mr. Dan Ellison.

A letter was received from Mr. David Beck, Executive Vice President of Farm Bureau, along with a check for \$5,000 for their sponsorship of the KACD Convention. A letter thanking them for their sponsorship will be sent to Farm Bureau from KACD. Farm Bureau President Mark Haney is on the convention agenda as a speaker.

A letter requesting NACD dues was received. The NACD dues have already been paid.

NACD Director's Report

Mr. Kevin Jeffries was not in attendance. President Ellison reported on his behalf. The 2014 NACD National Meeting Auction was a success. They raised over \$70,000 this year. President Ellison thanked everyone for their contributions. A thank you note was received from Mr. John Larson, CEO of NACD, thanking KACD and Mr. Jeffries.

KACD Auxiliary Report

Auxiliary President Betty Barrick was out due to back issues. Ms. Kimberly Richardson reported on her behalf. She reported that the KACD Kentucky quilt has been completed, and a picture was passed around for review. The scholarships have all been submitted. The awardees will be announced at a later time. Ms. Barrick has yet to hear from the SE NACD Auxiliary President. As of now they will be hosting a breakfast for the SE NACD Auxiliary on Saturday morning of the convention.

2014 SE NACD/ KACD State Convention – Downtown Marriott, July 11-15

Ms. Richardson provided the board with a copy of the convention registration form, the KACD agenda, and the SE NACD agenda. Most of the speakers are scheduled. The registration needs to go out today and the agenda needs to be finalized within the next few days. The agenda will be in booklet form. Speakers, sessions, and details discussed by the KACD board include:

- Kentucky's nominations for the SE NACD "Hall of Fame" are former district supervisors Mr. Melvin Doug Martin of Taylor County and Mr. C. A. Pantle of Daveiss County (deceased).
- Mr. Steven Kaufman, Executive Director of the Alabama State Soil and Water Commission, will introduce Alabama conservation lobbyist Mr. William "Noopie" Cosby as a speaker at the supervisor's breakfast.
- Mr. Robert Davis of Ag Strong will give a presentation to the group. Mr. Davis will also host a breakout session concerning production.
- One breakout session will consist of the Lyon and Caldwell County Conservation Districts discussion of how they were able to receive the Conservation Innovation Grant. They were provided the grant for their efforts in soil health.
- A supervisor leadership session will be led by field representatives.
- DNR Commissioner Steve Hohmann will be a guest speaker.
- DOF Director Leah MacSwords will be hosting the Forestry awards.
- KACD Officers will be elected during the Business Session.
- There will be a welcome address by either the Mayor of Louisville or Jefferson County Magistrate; which is being handled by David Rowlett and Mike Farmer, of the Jefferson County Conservation Board.
- All registration information will go to Ms. Terry Shaw prior to being received by the Division.
- Registration will also be sent with a display request form. Display space is limited. If forms are not filled out, display space will not be made available to the districts.
- The Sunday tour that was previously discussed (going to an Oldham County horse farm) fell through. Kevin Jeffries is continuing to work on scheduling a tour.
- Preparation is still ongoing for the banquet to be held Tuesday evening. Award nominations have begun to be received in the DOC office, and the award winners will be chosen soon. It was recommended to give Dow Corning a special recognition for providing scholarships to the winning Envirothon team.

Spring Area Meeting Reports

Area 7, 8, and 9

- **Area 7** – Mr. David Cowherd reported that the meeting was held in Somerset. The meeting went smoothly. Next year's limited program budget was discussed. No resolutions were offered at this time.
- **Area 8** – Mr. Rodney Bruce was not present. Ms. Richardson reported on his behalf. The area meeting was conducted in Salyersville at the extension office. Attendance was good. Mr. Bruce was not reelected. A gentleman from Floyd County was elected as the new Director. No resolutions were offered at this time.
- **Area 9** – Mr. Orville Bennett reported that they met at the Buckhorn State Park. Attendance was good. There was concern regarding the policy that stated that the previous state essay contest winner could reenter the following year by a previous state winner. This is to be discussed at the next Art and Writing Committee. There was one resolution proposed by Letcher County, though they have not submitted anything at this time in writing.

A resolution was submitted by Area 5 concerning the sale, growth, and control in Kentucky of invasive species. The resolution was presented by the Campbell County Conservation District who has concerns regarding the current invasive species list.

It was the consensus of the board that if a county proposes a resolution that they must have a representative of that county present at the convention to support the resolution. Two other resolutions were submitted, but they were either poorly worded and/or lacked additional explanation. Ms. Richardson will send an email explaining the expectations of the resolution(s) prior to them being presented to the Resolution Committee. The Resolution Committee meeting will be held Monday at noon at the convention.

NACD Fly-In Update

The National Association of Conservation Districts annual fly-in was held in March. President Ellison, Mr. Jeff Rice, Mr. David Rowlett, and Mr. Allen Bryant were in attendance. While in Washington, they were joined by NRCS representative Karen Woodrich. They met with Congressmen Andy Barr, Ed Whitfield, and Brett Guthrie and left information for Congressman Hal Rogers. They met with Senator Mitch McConnell and with Senator Rand Paul's staff.

Waters of the US

The U.S. EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have proposed a joint rule to clarify the types of waters that are and are not covered by the Clean Water Act. President Ellison solicited advice from the board concerning Kentucky's stance on the new policy. NACD officials met with EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy a few days after the roll out of this proposal. At this time, NACD has not declared a stance on this proposal. The new rule proclaims that all waters are connected (whether the water body is seen or not) and that the EPA has jurisdiction over all bodies of water. According to DNR Commissioner Steve Hohmann there is concern among the mining communities regarding this proposal. There is more impact to the western part of the state by this proposition. Commissioner Hohmann encouraged the board to submit comments and concerns by July 21st electronically to the EPA. It was the consensus of the board to leave any responses to the new proposal up to the NACD officials and/or Mr. Jefferies's discretion.

Division of Conservation Report

KACD Standing Committees

Many have been contacted or need to contact their field representatives concerning the setup and scheduling of various committee conference calls. The Conservation Programs Committee chaired by Mr. Rod Murphy is scheduled for May 27th at 8:00 pm (7:00 pm central time). The Education & Youth committee chaired by Ms. Barrick is scheduled for May 29th at 7:00 pm (6:00 pm central time). The Research Committee chaired by Mr. Wells is scheduled for May 22nd at 8:00 pm (7:00 pm central time). Public Info and Awards chaired by Mr. Joe Paul Mattingly is scheduled for June 9th at 8:00 pm (7:00 pm central time). The Soil Stewardship chaired by Mr. Cowherd is scheduled for June 5th at 8:00 pm (7:00 pm central time). Reports need to be submitted no later than June 19th.

2014 General Assembly Update

Since the last meeting the General Assembly reached a budget conclusion. The Division fared okay in the budget cuts. There will be \$6 million in State Cost Share program in 2015; \$0 in 2016. Some of the leftover funds (funds that were not used by landowners or were set aside for NOV's) are being removed. The Equipment Revolving & Infrastructure loan programs were reduced by \$1,125,000. There will be an additional cut of 5% to all existing conservation programs and budgets. Ms. Richardson has been working with Deputy Commissioner Sandy Gruzesky and the finance department to resolve. The State Cost Share Working Group will be meeting May 29th in Elizabethtown. They are working on making the 18-year old program more relevant and compatible to the new budget.

Envirothon

There will be 10 teams participating this year. Since there is not going to be an international Envirothon competition, Mr. David Rowlett was able to secure \$2,500 to be used towards scholarships. These funds were supplied by Dow Corning. Four of the 8 teams in the west competition and 6 of the 24 in the east competition will be going to the state completion. The Division asked the conservation districts to send goodies for goodie bags to be presented to the winners, and the districts and their employees have been very generous. Special thanks from the Division of Conservation and the Envirothon participants to those counties that have already participated. The state competition will be held May 21-22 at the UK Leadership Center in Jabez.

Agency Reports

Natural Resources Conservation Service - Mr. Tony Nott stated that Ms. Karen Woodrich will return in June. Since the last meeting \$11 million was received for EQIP funds. NRCS is currently working to complete the application ranking and are hoping to be approved for \$4 million for Kentucky's use. The GRP, WRP, and FRPP have been consolidated under the new 2014 Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). The Healthy Forests Reserve Program was maintained, but there are no funds available at this time for 2014. There are several easements in place right now. EWP's are being finalized. The only change to the Farm Bill at this time is the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) programs. The VPA-HIP is a competitive grants program that helps state governments and Indian tribes increase public access to private lands for wildlife-dependent recreation, such as hunting, fishing or hiking. There is the Regional Conservation Partnership Program

(RCPP) for districts or government entities to request grant funding for already existing programs where conservation is being placed on the ground through the use of conservation easements or support. The district or the division must also provide some type of match, such as money or technological assistance. Additional information about all the programs is available on the NRCS website.

Kentucky Department for Natural Resources - Deputy Commissioner Gruzsky reported that they are in the process of figuring out how to proceed within the next 2 years. She and Ms. Richardson reported on the water quality trading program. Three counties in northern Kentucky are participating. Ms. Richardson made note that the program has recently been expanded into 3 additional counties in order to spend grant funds. Newly hired field representative Jamie Ponder has been assigned to monitor the program. Ms. Ponder is extremely motivated and has already done wonders with the plan.

Farm Service Agency

Mr. Gary Crenshaw reported that the FSA is conducting training sessions throughout the state regarding Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) implementation. FSA is focused on doing a better job with their records and signing people up for the program. Each director is working closely with the county executive directors to make sure that they get their CRP checks completed. In the past three years many of those checks were not completed. Several final rules have been published as they pertain to the FSA programs. The Agriculture Risk Coverage program and the Price Loss Coverage program, set to be implemented this fall, are both currently taking bids from companies. This is to assist producers with efficient coverage. The Microloan program and the Farm Ownership Loan program have undergone some changes. FSA has a few talking points on the Farm Bill, but at this time cannot respond to them until the final rules and regulations are written and approved. Several of the existing programs have been extended.

Department of Agriculture

Mr. Steve Kelly reported that Commissioner Comer allocated \$600,000 from the Agriculture budget for the Division of Conservation. This was \$50,000 over what was originally promised; these monies will help to cover the environmental grants. Their budget was not cut as severely as the DOC. They had to close the Fuel Lab which saved over ½ a million dollars last year.

Kentucky Division of Forestry

Director MacSwords noted her appreciation of KACD Vice-President David Rowlett and DOC Director Richardson being present at the nursery rededication and ribbon cutting ceremony. It is a state of the art facility, which is completely mechanized and designed to use fewer people. The new nursery has a production time of four times the speed compared to if the seedlings were processed by hand (1 month turnover time as to a 4 month turnover time). The Governor announced the 20/20 Vision for Reforestation in Kentucky. This program is a statewide planting of 20 million seedlings for 20 years, using volunteer groups. All the seedlings purchased by the conservation districts have been added to the accomplishment list of that program, making the total 450,000 – 470,000 seedlings planted this spring alone. The Arbor Day Foundation had assisted in restoring the forest lands destroyed in 2012. They had donated an additional 5,000 seedlings to be planted in Campbell, Laurel, Menifee, Johnson, and Wolfe Counties. The conservation districts assisted by making sure the seedlings were planted. Five counties will be chosen for the same assistance from the Arbor Day Foundation next year. The Division of Forestry's budget cut was not as bad as other departments or divisions.

KACDE

President Leslie Fourqurean was not present, as the Christian County Conservation District meeting is on the same day. Mr. Brian Hacker reported on her behalf. Mr. Hacker reported that KACDE members just returned from their SE Board meeting where they planned the Annual Convention in Pigeon Forge, TN. The event was 2-days long. They then joined the Alabama District Employees Association, where they were hosting the Alabama Employee Workshop. The KACDE annual workshop is scheduled for this fall. KACDE will be accepting supervisor and district employee award nominations July through October 1. The national board meeting will be held the third week of June in Charlotte, NC.

RC&D Council

Mr. Hacker reported that the National RC&D Board meeting will be held in Mobile, AL the first week of June. Mr. Hacker encouraged any members of the RC&D council to attend. They have the opportunity to influence the South East and the National level RC&D convention, which is a rare occurrence. Even if a council member cannot attend, it is asked that they please send a representative in their place.

University of Kentucky

Dr. Steve Higgins was not in attendance.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Wilson, motion seconded by Mr. Cowherd.

Motion carried, meeting adjourned at 11:40 p.m.

Next Meetings will be held:

Next Board Meeting – 2014 Meeting Schedule: Second Tuesday at 9:30 a.m.

July 13-15-KACD Convention, Louisville, KY

September 9th

November 11th (State Holiday)